

Biswa Ijtema

FROM PAGE 1
A total of 800 Rab personnel would work round the clock dividing the venue into five sectors.

Several mobile courts and bomb disposal units from the army and Rab and plain clothed law enforcers will also be at the venue.

Police Superintendent of Gazipur Abdul Baten told The Daily Star that over 10,000 police would be deployed in and around the Ijtema ground while 48 CCTVs and 30 video cameras had been installed at different strategic points.

Major Masud Parvez, chief of the control room of the Ijtema security said helicopters, speedboats and motorised vehicles would be operative to ensure security.

Police and Rab sources said the law enforcers would search the devotees at five checkpoints.

More than two million devotees from across the country and world are expected to be at the Ijtema ground, a five-square kilometre area on the Turag.

Organisers' sources said more than 400 devotees from India, Pakistan, Maldives, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Malaysia, America and Philippine have already reached the Ijtema ground.

Meanwhile, the organisers have divided the Ijtema

ground into 31 khittas and set up 50 medical teams. BRTC shuttle bus service and 44 special trains will be accommodated for the devotees.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTION
The authorities have imposed restrictions on vehicular movement on several routes in and around the city for 24 hours from Friday 6:00pm for Ijtema.

These roads include Pragati Sarani crossing to Trigon-Gazipur crossing, Abdullahpur-Ashulia-Baipal crossing road, Mirpur road-Beribadh, Mirpur Zoo-Beribadh and Pallabi Eastern Housing-Beribadh road.

Ghorashal-Markul road via Kaliganj-Pubail will remain open to traffic during the period.

Vehicles heading towards Dhaka from Ghorashal have been asked to use Kanchpur-Jatrabari road.

All vehicles except for emergency services, Uttara residents, air-passengers and crew have been asked to take Mirpur-Savar as an alternative to New Airport Road.

Devotees reaching on foot will have to use Airport Golchattar-Azampur-Abdullahpur road and seven bailey bridges set up on the Turag and Kamranga Bridge, avoiding Tongi Bridge.

Ministers talk

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The government representatives at the meeting wanted to know from the villagers how they expected to be rehabilitated and compensated.

They decided to form a committee with two representatives from each village adjacent to the Barapukuria mine. There are more than 15 villages around the mine.

"Such a meeting is, in fact, first of its kind as far as coal-mine and rehabilitation issues are concerned which shows government's sensitivity to public sufferings caused by a large project implementation," said a source.

Earlier, on January 20 the government formed a committee to probe into the reasons for land subsidence in the Barapukuria coalmine area.

Given the committee's recommendation the government will compensate soon-to-be displaced and affected people by the coalmine project.

The committee was formed following a news report in The Daily Star on January 18 that about 4.2 square km area of the underground coal mine site will eventually subside up to a maximum depth of two meters in the mine's 30 years lifetime.

Though land subsidence is a natural byproduct of underground mining, this issue was omitted in the planning and approval of the coal-mining project in the early nineties under Khaleda Zia's rule.

As the environmental hazard and relocation issues were put aside in the project it did not have any budget to address them.

Newspapers have regularly run the reports on land subsidence in the mining area since 2006.

3 JS seats

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Awami League (AL) candidate Abdul Latif Biswas (now minister) was declared elected for the seat.

Counsel for the petitioners Ahsanur Rahman told The Daily Star that the petitions filed with the HC election tribunals will come up for hearing soon.

ASM Feroz Alam, independent candidate, in his petition said that his rival (AL candidate) ASM Feroz, who won the election, is a rent and bill defaulter, and an accused in a criminal case.

On December 3 last, the returning officer concerned cancelled the candidature of ASM Feroz on these grounds, but the Election Commission on December 10 permitted him to contest the election, he said.

The petitioner said had ASM Feroz not been allowed to contest the polls, he (ASM Feroz Alam) would have got AL nomination and would win the polls.

In his petition, independent candidate Mamunur Rashid Kiron said his rival BNP candidate Barkatullah Bulu won the election in Noakhali-3 constituency by resorting to various illegal practices.

Supporters of Bulu intimidated people who wanted to vote for him (Mamunur) and created panic at polling centres, he alleged.

Mamunur claimed if the election was free and fair, he would have won it.

Jatiya Party's Brig Gen (ret'd) Kazi Mahmud Hossain stated in his petition that he wanted to contest the polls as AL-led grand alliance nominee for Narsingdi-4 constituency, but the EC did not allocate any symbol for him.

AL candidate Nurul Majid Mahmud won the polls in this constituency.

Manzur Quader in his petition sought HC directives for recounting the votes cast and declaring him (petitioner) elected.

He mentioned that 1,689 votes were cancelled in his constituency.

And he would have won the polls race if these votes were not cancelled, he claimed.

3 whipped

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18. The locals however rescued the girl and kept her in a neighbouring house as they tried to violate her.

In a desperate bid to catch the girl, the young men raided the house and wounded three women who tried to protect the girl. One of them Nasima, 30, was admitted to Vederganj Health Complex.

Later, the issue rolled to upazila nirbahi officer who ordered police to take action.

Meanwhile, the village elders at the behest of parents of the culprits met at 11 am yesterday and settled the case. Jamila, a meritorious student, said she came from Kachikara union across the river Padma and used to stay in a house to continue her study.

UZ complaints

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office yesterday. Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain said, "The EC will not entertain complaints regarding the upazila parishad elections which are still coming to the commission."

"The complainants can now file cases with the election tribunals in the districts 30 days into publication of the gazette on the upazila election results."

The gazette will be published in a couple of days, Sohul said.

Replying to a question, he said the election was held successfully in 90 percent cases.

Meanwhile, BNP Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed yesterday submitted to the office of the Chief Election Commissioner complaints of irregularities, violence and intimidation of voters by ruling party men during the polling in eight upazilas.

Talking to journalists the EC Secretary, Rizvi said they have specific allegations about polling in the eight upazilas, and a huge number of such allegations are coming to them from across the country.

He demanded re-election and re-counting of votes in the eight upazilas.

The eight upazilas are Sharishabari in Jamalpur, Jamalpur Sadar, Fatikchhari in Chittagong, Birganj in Dinajpur, Bawfal in Patuakhali, Madaripur Sadar, Moreganj in Bagerhat and Comilla Sadar.

On judicial inquiry into polling in 13 upazilas including the seven with their poll

results suspended, Sohul Hossain said the district judge concerned will head each inquiry committee.

The EC on Tuesday suspended the results of polling in seven upazilas, which include Banchharampur in Brahmanbaria, Atrahaz in Narayanganj, Teknaf in Cox's Bazar, Kaliganj of Gazipur, Mehendiganj of Barisal, Muradnagar of Comilla and Raipura in Narsingdi-- on grounds of massive irregularities in the elections.

Earlier, the EC had suspended polling in six other upazilas due to similar allegations, which will also be investigated.

Replying to a query, Sohul said there has been no tug of war between the EC and the government centring upazila elections.

Asked if there was a change in the attitude of the administration during the upazila polls compared to that during the national elections, the election commissioner said due to the changed situation, possibly the administration has changed to a little extent.

On the High Court rules on Jamaat registration with the EC, Sohul said, "It is a sub judice matter. We'll tell the court on which principles we allowed registration."

CORRECTION
In our yesterday's issue, the headline of the story on upazila election -- "Poll results of seven upazilas cancelled" -- was not correct. In fact, the results of the seven upazilas were suspended which was mentioned rightly in the story.

7 students

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University Journalists' Association alleged that police beat up its president Golam Mostofa and Mamun Hossain of daily Jai Jai Din as they tried to enter the campus at about 10:30am.

In protest against the incident, the association formed a human chain for one hour at the Central Shaheed Minar.

When contacted, Abdul Maleq, deputy commissioner of Lalbagh zone, however, denied the allegation.

Jagannath University authorities closed the university sine die on Tuesday following three-hour-long clashes between students and police that left at least 100 people injured.

The clash took place when police resisted the students who had been carrying out movement to return their 12 dormitories grabbed by the criminals, policemen and Dhaka City Corporation.

SC upholds

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petition, DU counsel Advocate AFM Mesbahuddin told the court that the academic committees of DU have jurisdictions to make new rules regarding the admission to its departments and the HC can't interfere in this regard.

He prayed to the court to stay the HC verdict.

Petitioners' counsel Barrister Abdur Razzaq opposed the DU application saying that if the HC judgement is stayed, the writ petitioners and other Aleem students who passed in the admission tests can't get admitted into the university on time.

Upon a writ petition filed by five DU admission seekers, including Ibrahim Khalkil, who secured GPA-5 in Aleem examination under the Madrasa Education Board, the HC on January 20, declared illegal the new admission rules of DU's seven departments-- Economics, English, Bangla, Mass Communication and Journalism, International Relations, Women and Gender Studies, and Linguistics.

The HC also observed that the Madrasa Education Board should consider revising its syllabus to meet the prerequisites for admission to general academic courses.

Huda

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granted regular bail in this case.

Petitioner's lawyer advocate Sigma Huda told The Daily Star that with yesterday's one, Nazmul Huda secured bail in all 20 criminal cases against him and there is no legal bar on releasing him from jail.

The ACC filed a case against Nazmul Huda and his wife Sigma Huda with Motijheel police station on June 18 last year, on charge of taking bribes from a company Marga Net One in the name of publishing advertisements in their weekly magazine Khobor Antorale from September 30, 2004, to October 18, 2006.

Nazmul Huda was earlier sentenced to a total of 25 years' imprisonment in a corruption case and two extortion cases filed by the ACC.

Ferries stop

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disrupted for 13 hours due to dense fog.

Sources said the ferry services were suspended from 9:00pm Tuesday to 10:00am yesterday, causing immense sufferings to thousands of people travelling on the routes.

Five ferries loaded with vehicles carrying goods and passengers were forced to anchor at Paturia ghat while three ferries at Daulatdia ghat due to fog, said Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation manager (commerce) Ashraf Ullah Khan.

He said around 350 vehicles, including trucks and passenger buses, lined up at Daulatdia ghat while 300 vehicles at Paturia ghat at 6:30pm.

The ferry services resumed around 10:00am on the routes but the authorities struggled to ferry such huge number of vehicles.

"The pickup van carrying the body of my uncle from Dhaka Medical College Hospital reached Paturia ferry ghat at about 10:00pm Tuesday to go to our village home in Madaripur but we could not cross the river yet," Sajeda Begum said while talking to The Daily Star yesterday morning.

Obama's envoy

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He thanked Egypt for its efforts to turn into a lasting truce separate ceasefires Israel and Hamas declared January 18 after a devastating war and said Washington was "committed to vigorously pursuing lasting peace and stability in the region."

"The decision by President Obama to dispatch me to come to this region less than one week after his inauguration is clear and tangible evidence of this commitment," Mitchell said.

He arrived in Egypt on Tuesday amid the deadliest flare-up near Gaza since the fighting halted Israel's 22-day campaign on the Islamists stronghold.

Palestinian militants killed an Israeli soldier near the border early Tuesday and Israel retaliated with gunfire that left one man dead, an air strike that wounded three and bombing raids over border smuggling tunnels.

Senior Israeli officials, campaigning for February 10 parliamentary elections, vowed that the Jewish state would hit back hard for the attack.

"The army's reaction today was only operational. This was not the response to the killing of a soldier... Israel's response shall come," a senior government official quoted Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as saying.

For his part, government spokesman Mark Regev said: "In the face of such violent provocation, Israel will act to protect itself."

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Ehud Barak cancelled his departure to the United States, which had been due later Wednesday, because of the violence, a ministry official said.

"Barak decided to cancel his trip to the United States during which he planned to meet his US counterpart Secretary of Defence Robert Gates and other senior officials in the administration due to the security events in the south," he said on condition of anonymity.

Mitchell was due to meet with senior Israeli government and intelligence officials later on Wednesday and head to Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Thursday for talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Abbas hit out at Israel

Illegal Migrants

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Muslim ethnic group who fled persecution in Myanmar, also known as Burma, was highlighted earlier this month following accusations that some of them had been abused by Thai authorities.

Human rights groups say the Thai navy has twice intercepted boats filled with hundreds of Rohingyas from Bangladesh and abandoned them at sea, where hundreds later died.

Thai authorities have repeatedly denied wrongdoing, insisting they only detain and repatriate people entering the country illegally.

"There is no reasonable ground to believe that these illegal migrants fled from their country of origin for well-founded fear of being persecuted," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Thailand faces an "enormous burden" because of 3 million illegal migrants currently in the country, the ministry said, and "cannot afford to be a country of destination" for illegal aliens.

But the Washington-based group Refugees International has warned that any Rohingya repatriated to Myanmar "is subject to arrest and abuse."

Hussain said his group fled Myanmar about a month ago to escape poverty and persecution, and that the Myanmar navy intercepted their vessel as it sailed south toward Thailand. He said soldiers from four boats boarded their vessel with wooden and metal rods and beat them.

"They told us there are no Muslims in Burma, and they continued to beat us," he said. The migrants were detained for 10 days and then let go. "They told us not to come back again, or they'll shoot us all."

Tens of thousands of Rohingyas live in camps in Bangladesh, where many have been granted refugee status. Many more brave the seas in search of a better life. One of the most popular migration routes has been by boat from Bangladesh or Myanmar to Thailand then overland to Malaysia.

Army Col Manat Kongpan said a Thai navy patrol found the migrants near Surin island in Ranong, 460 kilometres southwest of Bangkok. They were handed over to police custody. Thai police fed the emaciated and haggard migrants, and treated their wounds.

ahead of the talks. "Today we are convinced more than ever, especially after the aggression against Gaza, that Israel does not want peace and we are going to say so to all those who come to see us," he told reporters late on Tuesday.

Abbas and Olmert had relaunched peace talks to great fanfare in November 2007 after a six-year hiatus, but the negotiations have made next to no progress.

Saying his Palestinian Authority planned to go to the International Criminal Court over Israel's "atrocious crimes that it committed in Gaza against the Palestinian people," the president also criticised the rival Hamas movement.

The Islamists, who kicked pro-Abbas forces out of Gaza in June 2007, had "dragged an entire people" to war by refusing to renew an Egyptian-brokered six-month truce with Israel on December 19, Abbas said.

In the wake of the war, Egypt has been holding separate talks with Israel and Hamas, as well as representatives of other Palestinian militant groups.

Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit said the talks have "evolved positively," and a "permanent" truce could be agreed in the first week of February.

He said such a ceasefire would lead to the reopening of crossing points into Gaza, where most of the 1.5 million population depend on outside aid, but which has been closed to all but basic humanitarian goods by Israel since Hamas seized power.

The war, launched on December 27 in response to militant rocket and mortar fire, killed more than 1,300 people, more than half of them civilians, and wounded more than 5,400, according to Gaza medics.

On the Israeli side, three civilians and 10 soldiers were killed in combat and by rocket fire.

Kibria's role

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National Professor Kabir Chowdhury presided over the programme organised by Bangladesh Foundation for Development Research while Dhaka University Professor Anwar Hossain presented a paper on Kibria.

In his memorial speech, Prof Anwar said, "If Shah AMS Kibria were alive now, he would have said there is no need for the caretaker government system to hold a free, fair and credible election. Meaningful elections could be held by strengthening the Election Commission and making it truly independent."

He said the 13th amendment of the constitution, which introduced the caretaker government system, should go and the EC should be empowered more for holding free and fair elections.

Prof Anwar urged the newly elected government led by Sheikh Hasina to carry out some reform programmes to achieve the dream of establishing a 'Digital Bangladesh', which they have promised in their election manifesto.

The DU professor also called upon the government to reinstate the original constitution of Bangladesh. The judiciary should be decentralised and kept above all political influences.

He urged the government to build a secular and democratic country based on the spirit of the Liberation War for achieving the long-desired economic freedom.

Prof Kabir demanded punishment to the killers of Kibria and also the killers of Bangabandhu and four national leaders. "We feel the absence of Shah AMS Kibria when the country is marching towards democracy."

Agriculture minister Matia Chowdhury, Shah AMS Kibria's wife Asma Kibria, sector commander Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafiullah, The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam and Advocate Sultana Kamal, among others, were present.

BNP district

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general secretary of Kishoreganj district BNP last night told The Daily Star.

Party leaders said reorganising process will get momentum from next week as the party's national standing committee will sit to finalise strategies to bring changes in party committees at all levels.

"After finalising the plan the chairperson will listen to the field level leaders to sort out eligible and competent leaders who will lead the party at grassroots level in the days to come," a former lawmaker of the party yesterday told The Daily Star.

Earlier, after the December 29 election the BNP chairperson declared that the party would be reorganized at all levels through democratic process.

NBR to unfreeze

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the account holders against whom cases have been filed and verdict has been delivered, those against whom cases have been filed and are now under trial; and the holders of the accounts into which investigation have been conducted but no case has been filed.

NBR has also sought opinions from the law ministry on about 132 frozen accounts for taking necessary steps.

The frozen bank account holders include former prime minister Khaleda Zia, her son Arfat Rahman Koko, her brother Maj (ret'd) Shamim Iskandar, her former political advisers Harris Chowdhury and Mosaddek Ali Fahu, her assignment officer Dr Firoz Mahmud Iqbal, Khaleda's nephew Shahrin Islam Tuhin and his wife Ayesha Islam, controversial businessman Gias Uddin Al Mamun, BNP leaders Moudud Ahmed, Nazmul Huda, Shahjahan Siraj and his wife Rabeya Siraj, son Rajib Siraj Opu and his wife Farzana Khan, Mirza Abbas, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Mir Mohammad Nasir, AKM Musharraf Hossain, Amanullah Aman, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku and Sajahan Omor, Ziaul Haq Zia, former Khulna City Corporation mayor Tayebur Rahman, former lawmakers Naser Rahman, Habibul Islam Habib, Wadud Bhuian, Dewan Muhammad Salauddin, Ali Azgar Lobi, Rashiduzzaman Millat, Kazi Salimul Haq, former Dhaka City Corporation commissioner

Monwar Hossain Dipjol, Doctors' Association of Bangladesh leader Dr Jahid Hossain and his wife Rifat Hossain.

Awami League leaders whose accounts were frozen include Mohammad Nasim, Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, ex-chief whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah and his wife, former lawmakers Joyanal Hazari, AHM Mostafa Kamal (Lotus Kamal), Haji Maqbul Hossain, his wife Fatema Tahera and son Masudur Rahman, Dr HBM Iqbal and his wife Dolly Iqbal, former minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya's son Dipu Chowdhury, former minister Sajeda Chowdhury's son Shadab Akbar, Mostafa Rashidi Suja and his wife Khodeja Suja, Sheikh Helal and his wife Rupa Chowdhury, Swetchasebak League President AFM Bahauddin Nasim and Secretary Pankaj Dabnath.

Others include owner of Orion Group Obaidul Karim and four members of his family, Giridharilal Modi of Uttara Group, Salman F Rahman of Beximco Group, former additional IGP Shahidullah Khan, Proshika Chairwoman Kazi Farook Ahmed, ex-adviser to the caretaker government justice Fazlul Haq, former secretary Ismail Jabiullah, former NBR member ATM Sarwar and his wife and former PSC member Mahfuzur Rahman.

Education

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Nahid also said government will also try to introduce a unified primary education system across the country merging the existing 11-kind of primary education system to end the discriminations in primary education.

MINISTER MEETING WITH ACADEMICIANS
The renowned academicians urged the education minister to stop the culture of forming new education commission to ignore the political interest.

Most of the academicians suggested formulating the national education policy based on Quadrat-e-Khuda Commission so that secular and science based education system can be introduced.

They also suggested that the report of the Quadrat-e-Khuda Commission should be slightly modified to make the policy fit for the country's existing education system.

"Millions of public money were spent for previous seven education commissions by different political governments. But they didn't implement the recommendations due to the apprehension of demonstrations by the opposition," said Prof Dr Zillur Rahman Siddique, former VC of Jahangirnagar University.

Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Chairman of Computer Science department of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, said govern-

ment should immediately cancel the postponed 'unirack education system' and introduce 'real unified education system' merging three systems-- Bangla, English and Madrasa.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury emphasised on quality books and skilled teachers for ensuring quality education in the country.

UGC Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam suggested forming several advisory committees for improving education system from primary to tertiary level.

Dr Sirajul Islam, Abdullah Abu Sayeed, DU VC AAMS Arefin Siddique and its Pro-VC Harun-Or-Rashid, Brac University VC Prof Zamirul Reza Chowdhury and renowned academician Momtaz Uddin Patwary, Prof Rangalal Sen, Mostafa Zabbar, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Prof Ajoy Roy and Khandakar Bazul Huq, among other academicians, were present at the meeting.

QUADRAT-E-KHUDA COMMISSION
Quadrat-e-Khuda Education Commission was formed in 1972 headed by the leading educationist and scientist Dr Quadrat-e-Khuda. The commission submitted its report to the then Sheikh Mujib government in May 1974. The commission suggested some major changes in the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.